

On the Beat Minneapolis VA Health Care System



Inside:

- Clinical Excellence Award
- Colon Cancer Screening
- Stress Linked to Falls
- Legion Auxiliary Visit
- Staff Newsmakers
- VA at the Fair
- Volunteer Spotlight
- Special Awards
- Staff Milestones

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Surgeon Dr. Paul Druck Receives Minneapolis 2013 Medical Staff Award For Clinical Excellence



Paul Druck, MD, VA surgeon, received the 2013 Medical Staff Award for Clinical Excellence at the annual meeting of the medical staff Oct. 2.

Here are the comments pulled from his nomination, which were read by Chief of Staff Kent Crossley, MD.

Dr. Paul Druck (l) and Chief of Staff Dr. Kent Crossley

sees the need to work closely with referring physicians and other specialists. . . He is not one to ever have a "turf war," instead he keeps the focus on what is best for the patient. . . One of the very first observations I had as a new member of the VA staff was the superlative clinical skills of this physician. . . I use him as a "sounding board." His sharp mind and sound reasoning skills are very helpful when deciding the best clinical path for my patients. . . His strong grasp of surgical techniques and anatomy is coupled with an extensive understanding of pathology and physiology.

His personality - Some might describe this physician as a "brainiac"—but when he is teaching, he does it in a way that is genuine. . . While some might argue the most important quality of a surgeon is "good hands," I believe strong clinical judgment is probably more important. . . Paul Druck's most impressive ability is the way he applies his massive knowledge base to make the right decisions for surgical patients. . . Although he is in a position of leadership, his style is one of consensus and example.

On the SICU - Paul takes an extraordinary amount of additional call. . . He is the first to "step up" when there is an uncovered emergency or in an issue with the call schedule. . . Through his commitment to the SICU, he sees sickest of the sickest. . . He even delayed getting badly-needed knee surgery until arrangements were made to cover for him in the SICU.

As a teacher and fellow physician - He

GROUP PHOTO AND DESCRIPTIONS OF THE OTHER NOMINEES, PAGES 3-4

On the Cover – Runners in the annual VA5K event. See Page 12

2013 Clinical Excellence Award Nominees



(L-R) Drs. Fawole, Olson, Weissmann, Goetze, McCarthy, Armstrong, Candy-Heinlein, Ericson, Druck, Fazendin, Ercan-Fang, Hartwig, Choudry, Ishani, Okosidinossian, Ostenso,, Johnson, Pruitt, Luhman

Michael Armstrong, M.D., Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, Dr. Armstrong has a heart of gold. He works well with those under his leadership and always shows great courage and strength. He wants to hear and answer your questions and will, in his own special way, arrive at the answer you are looking for. He has excellent communication skills and is a leader and a team player.

Audrey Caine, M.D., Radiology, Imaging – She takes personal interest in all the patients she comes into contact with. She puts the focus on quality, empathy and approaching each “exam” as a whole patient. Audrey has worked very hard to build relationships with Women’s clinic, Surgery and others to develop our imaging program for women. She can deal with stressful situations in a calm and reasonable manner and is highly respected by those who work with her.

Amy Candy-Heinlein, M.D., Women’s Clinic, Primary Care - Dr. Candy-Heinlein provided patient-centered care long before the Patient Aligned Care Team concept came into existence. Her ability to consistently provide thorough, prompt, high-quality patient care - in a seemingly effortless manner - causes us all to gape wonderment. She is always approachable, and has a quick easy smile.

Umar Choudry, M.D., Plastics/Reconstructive Surgery - Dr. Choudry is a talented and skillful surgeon. He conveys optimism and hopefulness to each and every patient. He often works with patients who are dealing with chronic conditions, but he never loses sight of improving their lives to the fullest. He is a positive influence and a valuable employee of this VA medical center.

Laine Ericson, M.D., Primary Care - Dr. Ericson is a prime example of how the VA should be perceived. She is attentive to all of her patients’ needs and makes our veterans feel they are ALL exceptional and deserve the BEST. She will contact patients directly and is prompt, courteous and a joy to work with. It is an honor to be part of her team.

Nacide Ercan-Fang, M.D., Primary Care - Dr. Ercan-Fang requires each patient to take ownership of their own health care and has a knack for making her patients feel equally involved in making decisions about their own health care. She provides complete comfort and assurances to the doctor/patient relationship. I work with many other veterans who are also patients. It is the opinion of many, to include myself, that Dr. Ercan-Fang is a “Top Shelf Provider.”

Tajudeen Fawole, M.D., Hospice & Palliative Care - Dr. Fawole provides superb clinical care to a large panel of CLC

patients. Patients and families have incredible trust in him and repeat patients frequently request Dr. Fawole to be their doctor. He is thoughtful in his assessments, thorough in his follow-up and diligent in keeping up with medical literature..

Elizabeth Fazendin, D.O., *Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation* - Dr. Fazendin's excellent clinical care and attention to customer service results in frequent compliments from veterans. Examples of recent comments include: "She is extremely thorough and caring," "I appreciate that she's always on time," "She's very genuine and sweet."

Christopher Hartwig, M.D., *Hospice & Palliative Care* - Christopher Hartwig is the doctor you would want to have care for one of your family members. He is conscientious in follow up and takes the time to appreciate all aspects of his patients' situations before offering his assessments and recommendations. He puts the interests of others ahead of his own but has the courage of his convictions to stand up for positions he feels are right..

Sibyll Goetze, M.D., *Nuclear Medicine, Imaging* - Dr. Goetze is a leader in nuclear medicine and recognized expert. She facilitates the management of patients with difficult problems, especially in cardiology and oncology. She has a sharp mind and is extremely pleasant. Patients are very grateful for her care. She has excellent communication skills and is always available to help with difficult problems. She is recognized by students and staff as a superb educator.

Areef Ishani, M.D., *Nephrology, Primary Care* - Dr. Ishani has an excellent professional demeanor when he deals with patients and colleagues. He will always take the time to discuss an issue, concern or patient consultation. He is a clinical expert in research processes and holds evidence-based practice to the core of his practice. His "salt and water" rounds have been one of the highest-rated resident learning experiences for the last couple of years.

James R. Johnson, M.D., *Infectious Disease, Primary Care* - Dr. Johnson is a bright, thoughtful, knowledgeable clinician with excellent clinical judgment. He attends on Internal Medicine inpatient services and the Infectious Disease Consult Service. He is also an outstanding ICU attending. Dr. Johnson is wise and humble. He is respected and well-liked by everyone.

Christopher Luhman, M.D., *North West Metro Ramsey CBOC, Primary Care* - Dr. Luhman provides exceptional care. Once notified of a problem, he addresses the issue in a timely fashion. He is focused on providing veteran-centered care and he responds to flags quickly and completely. His care for the whole person is evident in his notes.

Susan McCarthy, M.D., *Psychiatry, Mental Health* - Dr. McCarthy builds good rapport with her patients and is always willing to go the extra mile. Susan and I have shared some difficult and baffling cases-she is always up for brainstorming, strategizing and thinking through the multiple truths of these cases and situation. She establishes good relationships with patients and handles difficult situation with a winning combination of empathy and assertiveness.

Eleonore Okosdinossian, MBBS, *Maplewood CBOC, Primary Care* - Dr. Okosdinossian is professional and collegial and she is diligent in including me on relevant notes. When I have to contact her with a time- sensitive issue, she is always pleasant and focused on providing the necessary care. She is adept at identifying and dealing with urgent issues and following up later on the less urgent ones.

Kim Olson, M.D., *General Internal Medicine, Primary Care* - Dr. Olson has the remarkable ability to juggle multiple tasks and responsibilities with unflappable calm, precision and compassion. She is always approachable and willing to help. Kim is a true champion for our veteran patients. She works diligently to improve and streamline care for patients. .

Tuukka Andreas Ostenso, M.D., *Primary Care* - Dr. Ostenso always takes the time to ensure his patients feel their concerns are being addressed. When another provider is unavailable, he is always willing to cover for the provider's patients, no questions asked. You can tell he takes great joy in sharing his medical expertise with his co-workers. His door is always open. Dr. Ostenso is "the glue" of the 2J clinic.

Glennon Park, M.D., *Emergency Department, Primary Care* - Dr. Park was put in charge of the Emergency Department last November. Though his professional interests may not be in administration, he set these interests aside for the good of the department. The changes that have occurred since he has taken over have been dramatic. The patients always seem to feel everything is going to be okay if he is there.

Joseph Pruitt, M.D., *VISOR Program, Extended Care and Rehabilitation* - Dr. Pruitt's best quality is his genuine respect for those that surround him. Not only does he give his best to each and every patient, he makes every other clinician want to give the patient their best as well. He is truly one to admire and I do so wholeheartedly admire him.

Venkat Tholkanahalli, M.D., *Cardiology, Primary Care* - Dr. Tholkanahalli patients respect him and feel truly cared for by him. Dr. Tholkanahalli is intelligent, caring and personable. He has a great deal of integrity and personal strength. He is well respected by his peers and is sought out by his colleagues within and outside of the VA for advice, instruction and support.

Peter Weissmann, M.D., *General Internal Medicine, Primary Care* - Dr. Peter Weissmann is dedicated to improving how we deliver care to our veteran patients. He frequently involves other specialties in patient care issues. When dealing with patient care issues, he has the wonderful ability to listen with precision. He is very approachable and willing to help. He treats everyone with dignity and respect and is an asset to 3D.

VA STAFF NEWSMAKERS



Bahl



Dr. Smith



Laski



Dr. Blaylark



Holewinski

Jaimie Bahl, a program support assistant at the Minneapolis VA, was one of 25 people honored Sept. 11 by the Minnesota Humanities Center in a program titled “25 Veterans’ Voices.” The awards highlighted veterans who have made exceptional contributions to the community in business, health care, public safety, education, the arts and government. Jamie is a Navy veteran and the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), Minnesota 7th District Commander. Since joining a VFW post in 2006, she has continually been elected to higher positions every year. Jaimie spent five years as the VFW National Women Veterans Chairperson and three years as the State Chairperson. Additionally for several years, Jaimie has been a member of two local non-profits. When time allows, she participates with the Minnesota Patriot Guard at events.

Danny Smith, MD, a senior C&P examiner, was meritoriously promoted to the rank of Brigadier General upon his retirement from the Iowa Army National Guard in April 2013. He was also awarded the Legion of Merit for his service during Gulf Wars I & II and to Iowa over his career. General Smith began his career in the US Navy, later transferring to the US Army. This promotion and award are rarely given to physicians. They reflect Dr. Smith’s superb work in the Federal Military Service, Iowa Army NG, and his successful Combat Command during Gulf War I.”

Sandra Laski, social worker in the Addictive Disorders Service, received a certificate of appreciation from VHA Diversity and Inclusion Office for her contributions to the VHA lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community. This is the first such award. Sandra has been an active advocate in the LGBT community for over a decade. She serves on local, regional and national levels; she serves on teams providing virtual and e-consults to VHA providers. Locally, Sandra was instrumental in the development of the Minneapolis Transgender Consultation Team; she facilitates the Transgender Patient Support Group and provides staff training on Transgender care.

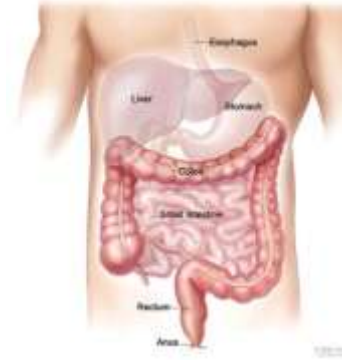
Wanda Blaylark, MD, MPH, of the Minneapolis C&P Department received national recognition at the end of July 2013 from General Allison A. Hickey, Under Secretary for VA Benefits. The General visited the St. Paul Regional Office and met Dr. Blaylark who was recognized for her role in resolving Camp Lejeune Contaminated Water cases and in being the sole physician who has successfully reviewed all Death and Indemnity Claims Cases for the VA that occur west of the Mississippi River in 2012 and 2013. Dr. Blaylark received the “Starfish Award” to honor her outstanding performance and efforts in further enhancing the mission of the VA. General Hickey also awarded Dr. Blaylark a “Commander’s Coin” at this same meeting.

David Holewinski, Veterans Justice Outreach (VJO) Coordinator, received the “District Court Award,” from the Hennepin County Court System for his work with the Hennepin County Veteran’s Court, established in 2010. The Steve A. Pihlaja Award is named after a late Judge to recognize annually a justice partner who exemplifies the highest level of judicial excellence, integrity, fairness and professional ethics, while serving the community or advancing the cause of justice. As the VJO Coordinator, **Holewinski** works with law enforcement, jails and courts to help connect veterans with the necessary treatment interventions for their mental or behavioral issues or addictions.

RESEARCH NEWS

VA Study Shows Common Test For Colorectal Cancer Saves Lives

A common test - called the fecal occult-blood test or FOBT - can reduce the risk of dying from colorectal cancer by as much as a third over three decades, according to a study published in the September 18 issue of the prestigious *New England Journal of Medicine*. Also referred to as a stool card, the FOBT looks for the presence of blood in stool. Patients who have a positive FOBT result are typically referred for colonoscopies to determine if they have colon cancer.



VA and University of Minnesota researchers examined screening records for more than 45,000 people ages 50 to 80 who were followed in the Minnesota Colon Cancer Cohort Study. Researchers obtained updated cause of death information for study participants from the National Death Index. When the two databases were reviewed, researchers found that people who received an annual FOBT had a 32 percent lower risk of death from colon cancer over a 30 year follow-up period compared to those who went unscreened. People screened every two years lowered their colon cancer death risk by 22 percent.

The research group was headed by **Aasma Shaukat, MD, MPH**, from the Divisions of Gastroenterology and Internal Medicine with the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Health Care System, and colleagues from the, School of Medicine and the School of Public Health of the University of Minnesota.

The new results were surprising, said **Dr. Shaukat**. "You would expect to see a decrease in the risk of dying of colon cancer in the first eight to 10 years. The fact that the effect was sustained through 30 years is actually fairly remarkable," said **Shaukat**. "It shows that the effect of colon cancer screening is profound."



DR. SHAUKAT

The long-term mortality findings come from an analysis of research in two phases from 1976 through 1992. That randomized trial enrolled 46,551 participants. About a third were screened yearly for colon cancer, another third were screened every two years, and the final third received no screening. The data show "aggressive screening, versus less screening, might be of benefit," **Shaukat** said.

Current screening guidelines in the U.S. recommend a variety of colon cancer screening options that begin at age 50 for most people. The study findings support those guidelines, though there were differences in blood testing benefits, depending on gender, Shaukat said. The study found that the test benefits men more than women in the early years of screening, prior to age 60. In women, the mortality benefit was seen largely at age 60 and above.

Women lag behind men by about 10 years in their risk of developing colon cancer and also dying from it, Shaukat said. The protective effect of estrogen is thought to be a contributing factor to the difference, along with healthier diet and lifestyle factors for women, she added.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

STRESS

VA Study: Life Events Raise Risk Of Falls in Older Men



DR. FINK

A study of around 5,000 older men has shown that stressful life events such as death of a loved one, or serious financial problems, significantly raised the risk of falls in the year following the incident. The research is published online in the journal *Age and Ageing*.

Howard A. Fink, MD, internist at the Minneapolis VA and colleagues conducted a study of 5,994 community-dwelling men over the age of 65 who were enrolled in the Osteoporotic Fractures in Men (MrOS) study in six locations across the United States. 5,125 participated in a second study visit and answered questions on stressful life events in the prior year. A further subset of 4,981 men reported complete data on falls for one year after the second visit.

During the second visit, participants were asked their marital status, and if widowed, their spouse's date of death. They were also asked to report occurrence of any of the following stressful life events: serious illness or accident of wife/partner; death of other close relative or close friend; separation from child, close friend, or other relative on whom the participant depended on for help; loss of pet; given up important hobby or interest; serious financial trouble; move or change in residence. Following the second visit, the participants were contacted every four months for one year regarding falls or fractures.

Among the 4,981 men with complete stressful life event and falls data, 27.7% fell and 14.7% fell multiple times during the year after visit two. Among men who reported stressful life events, falls occurred in 29.9% of cases where one type of stressful event had been reported; 35.5% of cases with two types of stressful events, and 39.9% of cases where three or more types of stressful life events were reported. In age-adjusted analyses, any stressful life event was associated with a 41% increase in risk of fall, and a nearly two-fold increase in risk for multiple falls in the following year. .

"We believe the study provides the strongest evidence to date supporting stressful life events as a risk factor for falls. However, the mechanism connecting stressful life events to falls is uncertain." – Dr.Fink.

In the paper, the authors discussed possible reasons for this association: stressful events trigger a neurohormonal response, causing stress hormones to be released, leading to falls and other adverse health events; or sudden emotions, triggered by a stressful event, could impact balance or visual attention, leading to a fall.

TIPS TO PREVENT FALLS

Exercise. Lack of exercise can lead to weak legs and this increases the chances of falling.

Be mindful of medications. Some medicines—or combinations of medicines—can have side effects such as dizziness or drowsiness.

Keep vision sharp. Poor vision can make it harder to get around safely.

Eliminate hazards at home.

- Install handrails and lights on all staircases.
- Remove small throw rugs or use double-sided tape to keep the rugs from slipping.
- Keep items you use often in cabinets you can reach easily without using a step stool.
- Put grab bars inside and next to the tub or shower and next to your toilet.
- Use non-slip mats in the bathtub and on shower floors.
- Improve the lighting in your home.
- Wear shoes both inside and outside the house. Avoid going barefoot or wearing slippers.

FROM CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL



American Legion Auxiliary Leaders Visit VA, Present Donation

On Sept. 30, leaders of the national and state American Legion Auxiliary (ALA) visited the medical center. In photo upper left, Raleen Tolzmann, Past President Department of Minnesota ALA, presents Minneapolis VAHCS Director Patrick Kelly a \$7500 donation to be used toward the remodeling of the Women's Clinic waiting room. In photo upper right, Nancy Brown-Park (center), National President, and Kris Nelson, Past National President ALA, are briefed by Dr. Apostolos Georgopolus in the Brain Sciences Center. The group also visited Prosthetics Research, Women's Clinic, Spinal Cord Injury & Disorder Center and Fisher House.



Volunteer Spotlight:

Ramona Puts Patients at Ease

Ramona Mutters used to help make people comfortable in the skies as a flight attendant but now uses her acquired skills to help Veteran patients feel more comfortable in the Hematology/Oncology Procedure Clinic.

She volunteers two mornings a week, welcoming patients to an area that many face with anxiety and trepidation. Her friendliness and reassurance immediately helps patients relax. She brings them beverages and snacks and even tucks them into their treatment chair with a warm blanket. She is very efficient and looks for ways to keep our patients happy and comfortable. Ramona also assists the clinic nurses and medical support assistants by running errands, stocking, cleaning treatment chairs

between patients, and answering phones. Because she is such a hard worker, she just sees what needs to be done and does it! She requires very little work direction or oversight. Her organizational skills are exceptional and she proposes solutions to challenges.

Since Ramona has been volunteering in this area for nearly eight years and understands it so well, she comes in on her days off to train new volunteers as needed. She is also willing to cover a shift when another volunteer is unable to come in. Ramona enjoys traveling and reading in her "spare time". Since she retired as a flight attendant, she uses her flight benefits to travel to London to seek out antique books. In addition to her duties here, she teaches Sunday school and is active in her political party. Ramona also volunteers for the American Lung Association and numerous other good causes. - **Article by Katy Ryan, Director, Voluntary Services**

Affordable Care Act What does it mean for Veterans?

The Affordable Care Act, also known as the health care law, was created to expand access to affordable health care coverage to all Americans, lower costs and improve quality and care coordination.

The good news is Veterans and family members enrolled in any of these VA health care programs meet the new requirement for coverage under the standards of the health care law:

- Veteran's health care program
- Civilian Health and Medical Program (CHAMPVA)
- Spina bifida health care program

Veterans enrolled in VA health care do not need to take additional steps to meet the health care law coverage standards.

The law does not change VA health benefits or Veterans' out-of-pocket costs.

If you are not enrolled in VA health care, you can apply at any time by visiting www.va.gov/healthbenefits/enroll, calling 1-877-222-VETS (8387), or visiting one of Minneapolis VA Health Care System's facilities to pick up and submit an Application for Medical Benefits, VA Form 10-10EZ.

Under the health care law beginning in 2014, people will have health coverage that meets a minimum standard (enrollment in VA health care benefits covers this requirement), qualify for an exemption or make a payment when filing their taxes if they have affordable options but remain uninsured.

Beginning Oct. 1, the Health Insurance Marketplace will be a new way to shop and purchase private health insurance. Although VA health care covers the minimum law standard for insurance, Veterans can continue to use VA for all of their health care needs, or complement it with private health insurance or coverage by other federal health care programs, including Medicare, Medicaid and TRICARE.



Information about the Health Care Marketplace is available at www.healthcare.gov.

Additional information about

ACA and VA benefits is available at www.va.gov/ACA.

Questions Answers about the Affordable Care Act

Q. What happens if I don't have health coverage?

A. Those who have access to affordable coverage yet remain uninsured starting in 2014 may have to make a payment when filing their federal income taxes.

Q. I am enrolled in VA health care. Would I be eligible for assistance to pay health insurance premiums on the Health Care Marketplace if I choose to purchase health care outside of VA?

A. Although it's your choice to purchase private health insurance on or off of the marketplace, since VA meets the ACA coverage requirement, you wouldn't be eligible for assistance to lower your external insurance premium costs from VA.

Q. Are my family members who aren't eligible for VA or other federal health care programs eligible for assistance to purchase health care insurance?

A. Many options are available to those family members not eligible for VA health care benefits. The marketplace provides answers at www.healthcare.gov.

Q. Can I cancel my VA health care coverage?

A. Yes. However, acceptance for future VA health care coverage will be based on eligibility factors at the time of applications, which may result in a denial of benefits.

Milestones – Congratulations!

<p><u>45 years</u></p> <p>Robert Munson Police</p> <p><u>40 Years</u></p> <p>Joyce Loch Research</p> <p><u>35 Years</u></p> <p>Helen Thilmany ECR</p> <p>Linda Dreblow Specialty Care</p> <p><u>30 Years</u></p> <p>Carl Isenhardt Mental Health</p> <p>David Adriansen Education</p> <p>Donald MacLennan ECR</p> <p>Ronald Petersen NFS</p> <p>Deb Muller Education</p> <p>Terese Tacklind Primary Care</p> <p>Sandra Killebrew HR</p> <p>Sandra Jones Education</p> <p>Joyce Damon Primary Care</p> <p>Joan Erickson Nutrition</p> <p>Bernadette Pearson NFS</p> <p>Wendy Cumming Patient Care Chief of Staff</p> <p>Vicki Morrison, Primary Care</p> <p>Gregory Gustafson Business Office</p> <p><u>25 Years</u></p> <p>Julie Schonrock Pathology/Lab</p> <p>Janine Bong Pharmacy</p> <p>Lisa Highley Specialty Care</p>	<p>Wendy Worner Specialty Care</p> <p>Curlen Martinson Primary Care</p> <p>Margaret Fashingbauer Primary Care</p> <p>Lynn Pinske Mental Health</p> <p>Lori Baier Primary Care</p> <p>Corrie Burian Primary Care</p> <p>Tamara Gottas Primary Care</p> <p>Karen Rafter Primary Care</p> <p>Jennifer Henderson Primary Care</p> <p>Jan Estis Primary Care</p> <p>Greg Rifleman Specialty Care</p> <p>Carol Kostecky Engineering</p> <p><u>20 Years</u></p> <p>Loretta Nemitz Primary Care</p> <p>Becky Wittig ECR</p> <p>Leonard Bemis Enviro Health</p> <p>Vicky Sirovy Nursing Service</p> <p>Lori Danzl ECR</p> <p>William Thomas Pharmacy</p> <p>John Billig Mental Health</p> <p>Joletta Wiemann Primary Care</p> <p>Cynthia Demorrett Nursing Svc</p> <p>Robert Sivanich Mental Health</p> <p>Sandra McElroy Primary Care</p> <p>Laurie Kubes Primary Care</p> <p>Rebecca Langan Director's Ofc</p> <p>Brenda Roche Primary Care</p> <p>Malasondra Dybevik IT</p>	<p><u>15 Years</u></p> <p>Linda Carlson Specialty Care</p> <p>Lisa Barett Mental Health</p> <p>Thomas Pawlak Primary Care</p> <p>Jeffrey Peterson ECR</p> <p>Chuanfeng Wang Research</p> <p>Richard Evans Engineering</p> <p>Timothy Sather IT</p> <p>Mark Bowie Enviro Health</p> <p><u>10 Years</u></p> <p>Larisa Kusar, ECR</p> <p>Amy Leuthner, Pharmacy</p> <p>Olga Bondarenko, Pharmacy</p> <p>Anita Traynor, Nursing Service</p> <p>Gail McMiller, ECR</p> <p>Heng Chhour, ECR</p> <p>Jill Crisler Primary Care</p> <p>Steven Anderson, ECR</p> <p>Sydnie Wolfe, ECR</p> <p>Heather Brummund, Admin Svs</p> <p>Christianna Brown, Primary Care</p> <p>Ernest Thomas, Specialty Care</p> <p>Suzanne Bradford, Mental Health</p> <p>Christopher Roemhildt, Vet Center</p> <p>Christine Pocha, Primary Care</p> <p>Timothy Whittaker, Enviro health</p> <p>Quentin Pratt, Environmental Health</p> <p>Kevin Smith, Environmental Health</p> <p>Christopher, Gabrielson, NFS</p> <p>Brian Meier, Primary Care</p> <p>Christine Loweth, Specialty Care</p> <p>Judith Terry, Specialty Care</p> <p>Brenda Meade, Pharmacy</p> <p>Pong Robinson, ECR</p> <p>Mary Paulson, Engineering</p> <p>Gihyun Yoon, Mental Health</p> <p>Sarah Polson, Director Office</p> <p>Daniel Silversmith, Mental Health</p> <p>Elvis Leighton, Admin Services</p> <p>Stephanie Anderson, Primary Care</p> <p>Shannon McGaughey, Primary Care</p>
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Minneapolis VA Participates in Military Appreciation Day



Stacy Dolan (I) describes My HealtheVet program to a veteran at Military Appreciation Day, held Aug 27 at the Minnesota State Fair. “Despite the 95-degree heat, it was a great event. Several Veterans and their families stopped by the booth to ask questions and learn more about My HealtheVet,” said Ms. Dolan, coordinator of the program in Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis VA Suicide Prevention program staff provided information for veterans throughout the day. They were busy handing out brochures and items that included the crisis hotline phone number. Pictured here is VA staffer Michelle Kelly.



They're off!

VA5K RUN, WALK & ROLL

About 80 runners, walkers and wheelers participated in the annual VA 5K on the medical center campus Sept. 14. The event was co-sponsored by the Minneapolis VA and the Paralyzed Veterans of America. At left is physical therapist Hilari Olson and her family, husband Thomas and kids Hudson and Amelia.



NEWS FROM VA CENTRAL OFFICE



DR. PETZEL

Dr. Petzel Retires; VA Commission to Identify Candidates for Position as Under Secretary for Health

The Secretary of the Veterans Affairs is convening a commission to recommend candidates to the President for appointment as the Under Secretary for Health (USH) for the Veterans Health Administration (VHA). Following a 40-year career serving Veterans as a VA physician, teacher, and administrator, Dr. Robert A. Petzel, will retire in 2014 as planned, following a four-year tenure as Under Secretary for Health. He has served in VA central office since February 2010. Previously, he served as Network Director of VISN23 and the Chief of Staff of the Minneapolis VA.

Flu Shots Available

The VA strongly recommends all people 6 months of age and older receive an Influenza vaccination this season. • Vaccinations are available for enrolled Veterans at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center and Community Based Outpatient Clinics. • If you would like a vaccination, please call your clinic and make an appointment or ask at your next scheduled visit or attend one of the listed Flu Clinics. • If you received a flu shot elsewhere, please notify your provider so it can be put into your medical record. See more at: http://www.minneapolis.va.gov/MINNEAPOLIS/features/2013_Flu_Season_Information.asp#sthash.zCQmUpRu.dpuf

Walk-In Clinic at Minneapolis VA Medical Center Thursday, October 24, 8 am-3:30 pm; Friday, October 25, 8 am -3:30 pm; and Saturday October 26, 9 am – 1 pm. In **Room: 1G-116**.





Lead 2013 Graduates Front Row: Dana Christiansen, radiology tech; Andrea Burklin, RN; April Eilers, visual information specialist; Marnie Roige, OT coordinator; Amanda Simone, physical therapist; and Courtney Sanchez-Fernandez, program assistant; Middle Row: Sharon Hicks, medical records administrator; Victoria Lewis, medical support assistant; Christine Chiro, psychologist; Cynthia Beagle, clinical applications coordinator; Ashley Cassel, physical therapist; and Rachel Harjes, medical technology supervisor; Back Row: David Schroeder, IT; Darr Sigler, program support assistant; Beau Bedore, speech pathologist; Richard Digatono, police officer; John Pignatello, radiation therapist; and Patrick Kelly, director of Minneapolis VA Health Care System, who presented certificates.

Colon Cancer Screening - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

The study did not compare the effectiveness of FOBT with colonoscopies, which is the predominant colon cancer screening tool in the U.S.

Shaukat and VA colleagues around the country are collaborating on a study that directly compares stool cards to colonoscopy. Results are expected in seven to eight years. Until then, the research shows that fecal occult-blood tests are a viable screening tool, if used regularly, she added. Shaukat said she's noticed that it is easier to convince some patients to take the stool test, than it is to convince them to get a colonoscopy.

"I think the best test is the one that gets done," said **Shaukat**. "It has a lot of advantages in being inexpensive, readily available and carries no harms. So this might be a very good option for individuals to undergo. And if it's positive they would get a colonoscopy. But if it's negative they could get stool cards every year."

Co-authors were: Steven Mongin, MS, Mindy Geisser, MS, Frank Lederle, MD, John Bond, MD, Jack Mandel, PhD, and Timothy Church, PhD.





DIVERSITY DAY 2013

September 18th marked the 10th anniversary of Diversity Day at the Minneapolis VA. Diversity Day is a day set aside to celebrate our cultural backgrounds and to create awareness of cultural differences in our workforce and veteran population.

What is diversity?

Diversity is accepting that individuals are unique and recognizing our individual differences. Race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical abilities, religious beliefs, or political beliefs all encompass diversity. It is about understanding each other and embracing differences within each individual. Workplace diversity is the opportunity for employees' personal growth. Spending time with culturally diverse co-workers can create exposure to new ideas, cultures, perspectives, and encourage employees to be more well-rounded members of society.

The VA continues to grow in workplace diversity in all aspects of patient care services, business administration, administrative executives and administrative support. Currently the Minneapolis VA employees 8% African Americans, 1.2% Hispanic, 1.2% American Indian/Alaskan, 4% Asian, 84% Caucasian, 1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, 24% Veterans, 63% women and 10% persons with disabilities.

The Diversity Committee is comprised of a diverse group of employees, from all areas of the medical center. If you would like information on becoming a committee member please contact Art Howard at 612.725.1612. - **By Sandra Wicklund, Public Affairs Specialist**



Director Kelly presented deputy Scott Frame and his K-9 Wesley appreciation certificate.





THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS INVITES YOU TO ATTEND THE OFFICIAL
STATE OF MINNESOTA
VETERANS DAY EVENT

NOVEMBER 11, 2013
VETERANS MEMORIAL COMMUNITY CENTER
8055 BARBARA AVENUE
INVER GROVE HEIGHTS, MINN.
8:30 - 9:30 A.M. - FREE BREAKFAST
10 A.M. - PROGRAM

SPONSORED BY THE MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS AND THE MINNESOTA COMMANDERS' TASK FORCE. THE EVENT IS OPEN TO THE PUBLIC. FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT MINNESOTAVETERAN.ORG

